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~~*~~ DRAFT MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT
ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES IN VIETNAM
3d Draft, 1 March

EXCERPTS FROM WEEKLY COMPILATION
OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

~~*~~ GENERAL TAYLOR'S MEMOS
(Filed separately)

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAPERS

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(Back-up material listed on BACK-UP Tab)

DECLASSIFIED

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Alternative Strategies in SVN

This memorandum examines the situation in SVN in light of U.S. political objectives and General Westmoreland's request for additional troops, as stated in General Wheeler's report. It considers alternatives to the current directives to General Westmoreland. Our assessment of the situation is that:

1. The ARVN and the GVN, while not near collapse, have been greatly weakened and cannot make any substantial contribution to progress in SVN over the next few months.

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2. The NVN/VC forces in SVN, despite their heavy casualties, maintain the capability for offensive operations and for protracted conflict. The enemy can and almost certainly will, as he has in the past, offset any increase in U.S. combat forces in the South.

(not at present)

1

3. General Westmoreland and U.S. military forces have been asked to carry more of the burden of securing our political objectives in Vietnam than can be borne by military power. The current strategy of destroying the enemy or driving him out of SVN would require at least a doubling of U.S. force levels; this would result in complete Americanization of the war and the total frustration of any prospects of developing the political and military strength of the South Vietnamese. It would thus make impossible the attainment of our political objectives.

NVN
VC

4. We face an immediate threat to U.S. forces in the DMZ area and throughout I Corps. There is a real danger of a greater GVN collapse in the Delta; the VC could seize some provincial capitals and set up a government.

yes

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Based on these assessments our recommendations are:

1. Approve a NSAM stating that our political objective is a peace which will leave the people of South Vietnam free to fashion their own political institutions. The NSAM should state that the primary role of U.S. military forces is to provide security in the populated areas of South Vietnam rather than to destroy the VC/NVA or drive them out of the country (Tab A). We should plan on maintaining the posture necessary to accomplish this objective for a considerable period.

2. Approve the immediate dispatch of an additional 10,500 military personnel to South Vietnam (Forces and Readiness at Tab N).

3. Approve an accelerated and expanded program of increased fire power and mobility for ARVN and other elements of the GVN Armed Forces (Equipment and delivery dates at Tab C).

4. Send General Taylor to Saigon to explain the NSAM to MACV and the GVN and to request General Westmoreland to develop a strategy and force requirements to implement the military objectives stated in the NSAM.

5. Dispatch one or two high-level civilians to Saigon with General Taylor to warn the GVN that it must broaden their base of political support, end its internal bickering, purge corrupt officers and officials and move to develop efficient administration and effective forces. They should also begin a discussion of negotiations while informing the GVN of the increased support to be provided for ARVN (TOR at Tab D).

6. Deliver a Presidential address to the American public explaining our new strategy in light of the enemy's new tactics (Draft text at Tab E).

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Not used
possible - hold
2 - I Corps
get into
if Corps
agreed

yes

yes

yes